

## **SCHOOLING AND COLONIALITY: CONDITIONS UNDERLYING 'EXTRA LESSONS' IN JAMAICA**

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**ABSTRACT:** Little research has been influenced by postcolonial analysis of educational issues in specific island-state systems. The focus of this article is on the Jamaican education system and its relationship with extra tuition paid for by parents who hope to give their children an educational advantage. This study seeks to address the gaps in the literature by critically positioning an anti-colonial discursive framework to examine the conditions underlying the prevalence of this extra tuition, popularly known as 'extra lessons' in Jamaica. The article reports the qualitative data collected from a larger study based on mixed-methods design. The holistic case study describes a rich and contextual macro level system from 3-education regions in the country and a total of 62 participants. The data illustrates a historical pattern of social stratification and the lasting impact of an inherited examination-driven system. Essentially, extra lessons in Jamaica thrive because of two factors: a) unsatisfactory conditions of learning, especially in less-resourced schools; and b) the drive leading parents to provide an advantage for their children even in traditionally elite schools.

**KEYWORDS:** Jamaica's school system, extra lessons, coloniality.

In 2004, the Jamaican Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture reported that the main problems and challenges facing Jamaica's education system revolved around access to full secondary education, equity and quality of schools, poor performance rates, and increasing gender disparities amongst students. In 2008, the Jamaican Minister of Education, giving details on school performance in the regional Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC) exams, reported to the parliamentary cabinet that 71% of a sample population

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cohort of 16 year olds in Grade 11 passed two or fewer subjects at the minimum grade level (Ministry of Education, 2008). The 2009/ 2010 poor performance of students particularly in CSEC mathematics, showed that close to 70% of the secondary school students were performing below average. In 2013, the National Education Inspectorate report explained that students' performance in Mathematics and English in 75% of the schools studied was below average and needed immediate support (NEI, 2013, p. 20).

As a direct outcome of the inadequacies of the Jamaican education system, after-school tutoring and academic lessons, described locally as *extra lessons*, continue to address the growing gap in achievement due to inequities between schools and teaching standards (Spencer-Rowe, 2000). Extra lessons are essentially additional academic lessons, through private or public tutoring, outside of the regular school curriculum. Public tutoring refers to teachers providing additional tutoring at no charge. This occurs with the support of government subsidies as well as through the altruism of teachers addressing a perceived need to provide additional tutoring to their students. Private tutoring involves the charging of fees for lessons. Lochan and Barrow (2008) defined extra lessons as "teaching/learning activities outside of the normal school timetable that attempt to cover the formal school curriculum at a cost to the student or parent" (p. 46). Extra lessons in the Caribbean represent a response to inequitable teaching in the classroom, overcrowded classrooms and the inadequacy of preparing students for CXC exams (Brunton, 2000; Lochan & Barrow, 2008). Although not studied in this paper, at the primary level, extra lessons are prevalent for the purposes of preparing students for the various standardized national exams, such as the Grade Four Literacy and Numeracy Test and the Grade Six Achievement Test, to name a few.

Against this background, this paper discusses the conditions underlying the current situation of extra lessons in Jamaica. In doing this, the paper presents findings on the role of education, the examinations-driven society and the conditions of schools from the perspective of secondary students preparing for the CSEC exams, their parents, teachers and key government officials. The paper derives from a larger mixed-methods study, which sought to quantitatively predict and qualitatively explore how extra lessons impact

students' perceived academic achievement at the CSEC level (Stewart, 2013).

### **Background and Context**

Lochan and Barrow (2008) argued that the demand for extra lessons is driven by the "colonial heritage of an examinations driven school system" (p. 45). With the introduction of the Cambridge Local Examinations in 1882, an examinations-driven culture would later develop among those who had the possibility of taking the common entrance examination for secondary school entry at age eleven plus, as there was increasing competition for the few prestigious schools in the country.

Initially, "schooling in Jamaica was knowledge production that was entirely under the control of missionaries" (Campbell, 2006, p. 195), whose main interests were to deliver moral and religious education to 'civilize' the Negro population. Rose (2002) stated that the legacies of British colonialism were "to foster autocratic types of rule and to perpetuate colonial attitudes of subservience" (p. 3). For over a century, the upper echelons of British colonial rule designed policies to remedially "educate and where necessary indoctrinate the colonized to accept an inferior role, both in terms of their status and the jobs they were allowed to fill" (Bacchus, 2006, p. 260). Further explained by Campbell (2006):

Colonial education has been one of the most damaging tools of imperialism because it has inculcated populations from a young age with ways of understanding themselves as culturally worthless" (p. 195).

This observation of Campbell's serves to provide insight into a stage of my own educational journey in Jamaica while I was in high school. At the age of thirteen, I gave up on education, believing that education had given up on me. In a classroom of some 40 students, my last name landed me at the back of the class, in the left hand corner of the room. I attended a co-educational public, religious-based high school in which some teachers had the girls sit on one side of the classroom away from the boys. At the back of the classroom, it was difficult

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both to see the blackboard as well as hear the teacher lecture. The few times I attempted to raise my hand and ask a question, I was told to be quiet. I remember one day, the Dean of Discipline called in my father as I was doing poorly in math and English literature to name a few.

As a result of the meeting, he enrolled me into Mr. Bell's extra lessons where "I engaged critically in a dialogic discourse of shared knowledge" (Stewart, 2012, p. 209). For the first time in my educational journey, I was expected to ask as many questions as needed, and encouraged to challenge my tutor's style of instruction. Within a year, Mr. Bell registered me, as a fourth form or grade 10 student, to sit the Mathematics CXC exam, which was normally taken in fifth form or grade 11. I earned a distinction and realized that I was not the problem; the issues arose from the conditions of traditional schooling. I would later find out, that even though extra lessons accounts for the third highest household education expenditure after transportation and lunches, there was little to no empirical evidence on the impact of extra lessons on education in Jamaica (JSLC, 2009). Motivated by my own schooling in Jamaica to challenge this lack of research, I embarked on a doctoral study to examine the scope and prevalence of extra lessons in Jamaica and its impact on secondary school students (Stewart, 2013).

### **Examinations-Driven Education System**

Even though this article focuses on extra lessons at the secondary level, I start by explaining the context of the primary and secondary examinations-driven system in order to set the background of the study. Primary level education essentially lasts for 6 years and is offered in primary schools, preparatory schools, junior high schools, and all-age schools (MoE, 2010-2011). Jamaica's primary education system follows the "grade" system from grades 1 to 6 (see Appendix A for flow chart of education system). Students are assessed in grade 1 using the Grade One Individual Learning Profile (GOILP). In grade 3, students are tested using the Grade Three Diagnostic Tests in Mathematics and Language Arts. The Grade Four Literacy and Numeracy tests are a pivotal marker in primary education, as students who are certified literate are then allowed to go on to take the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) (MoE, 2012-2013). As such, there is a common trend

to have students in primary extra lessons in preparation for the Grade Four Literacy Test. The Common Entrance Examination (CEE), which was discontinued in 1999 and replaced by the Grade Six Achievement Test, was essentially used to stratify students' placement in secondary schools. Due to the limited number of full secondary high schools (grades 7 to 11) and the outnumbering demand for student placements, especially in high-performing or better resourced schools, there was a resulting access problem for children each year.

The secondary schooling system used to follow the 'form' structure similar to that in the United Kingdom, but currently uses the 'grade' system, in which secondary education starts in grade 7. The first level of lower secondary education spans grades 7 to 9. All-age schools and junior high schools only cover lower secondary education. Upper secondary education covers grades 10 and 11. Opportunities to matriculate to upper secondary schools from junior high schools and all-age schools exist when students sit and successfully pass the Grade Nine Achievement Test (GNAT). Students at full secondary high schools (Grades 7 to 11), Technical and Agricultural high schools mainly take the CSEC exams set by the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), when they are in Grade 11. Thereafter, students either have an option to matriculate into grades 12 to 13, or to go into tertiary education. There are very few schools that offer grades 12 to 13 for preparation of the CXC Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE).

Several types of institutions in Jamaica provide tertiary or higher education. These range from teacher colleges, community colleges, and vocational training colleges to the university level. Entry qualifications into these institutions require CSEC and/ or CAPE qualifications. The importance of passing these examinations in the society is further exacerbated by the fact that most employers and tertiary institutions require successful passes of CXC exams for consideration of employment and entry. Passing at a specified level of the CSEC six-point grading scheme denotes to employers and tertiary institutions what CXC considers as "satisfactory grades for entry-level employment" and what "should be considered as satisfying the matriculation...and entry requirements" to tertiary institutions (CXC, 2015).

## **Theoretical Perspective**

The theoretical framing of this study derives from contextualizing the term coloniality within the Jamaican decolonizing society, which is still entangled in negative, inherited colonial structures and beliefs about education. As informed by theories of coloniality (Mignolo, 2011; Ngugi, 2012), the term reminds us of “border” relationships between schools and their communities, in which schools are at the center of “knowing” and the communities are at the peripheries (Ghiso & Campano, 2013). This hierarchical divide seems to be at the root of the problematic conditions that still shape the Jamaican education system. As such, I am situating the issues of coloniality within Dei’s (2000) use of an anti-colonial discursive approach in order to analyse the underlying conditions of extra lessons in Jamaica.

According to Dei (2000) an anti-colonial discursive approach acts as a dichotomous framework, because it is

Both a counter-oppositional discourse to the denial and repudiation of the repressive presence of colonial oppression, and an affirmation of the reality of recolonization processes through the dictates of global capital (p. 117)

More importantly, the anti-colonial discursive approach recognizes the importance of culturally responsive and nationalistic-constructed knowledge, inclusive of oral stories, reclamation of native languages and dialects, “cultural histories and daily human experiences and social interactions” (Dei 2000, p. 117). It is through the application of this approach that indigenous knowledge is affirmed and recognized as an “integral part of the ongoing co-creation and re-creation of academic knowledge/work” (p. 113). Additionally, Dei (2004) established questions, methods, and strategies to apply an anti-colonial discursive framework to academia.

Specifically, I used the anti-colonial discursive framework to (a) incorporate the local language, “Indigenous cognitive categories and cultural logic to create social understandings” (Dei, 2000, p. 117) from the participants; (b) utilize and combine indigenous literature with socioeconomic understandings of the Jamaican society; (c) recognize and contribute to the importance of research done by “minoritized,

indigenous and local scholars in reintegrating local and native languages in the education of the young” (Dei, 2004, p. 260); and (d) celebrate and value the use of oral, visual, and traditional materials of resistance and re-historization (Dei, 2000). Thereby, this approach centered the voices of the participants through the modes of data collection and interpretation of their stories in describing the conditions that gave rise to the current situation of extra lessons in Jamaica.

Further to this, Dei (2000) posited, “how does one arrive at meaningful and genuine theories (discursive frameworks) that take into account different philosophical traditions (e.g., Western and Indigenous thought)( p. 263)?” He went on to explain that the formulated question should interrogate institutionalized power and privilege. This led me to question whether the current education system is a legacy of the colonial past, a result of neocolonial policies which include socially biased planning. Is the phenomenon of extra lessons today an unintended outcome of capitalism? Further to this, I use the framework to argue that extra lessons can be attributed to a capitalist approach to education that is driven by a business model and exacerbated by the dominant elite class. As found in the larger study (Stewart, 2013), the business model included forces of demand and supply with perceived returns on investment similar to that explained in Bray and Lykins’ (2012) study. In this way, Dei’s framework can be used to problematize the prevalence of extra lessons as arguably a continued neoliberal and capitalist residuum of coloniality.

## **Methodology**

This article reports the selected qualitative findings from a larger, transformative mixed methods study (Stewart, 2013). The qualitative portion of the study employed a holistic multi-case design (Yin, 2009) applied to a single unit of analysis: extra lessons. The decision to use a mixed methods study described as ‘transformative’ is guided by Creswell and Plano Clark’s (2011) four primary reasons of selection:

1. The research seeks to address issues of social justice and calls for change
2. The researcher sees the needs of underrepresented or marginalized populations

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3. The researcher has a good working knowledge of the theoretical framework used to study underrepresented or marginalized populations
4. The researcher can conduct the study without further marginalizing the population under study. (p. 97)

Additionally, the methodology mapped well onto Dei's (2000) framework that is inherently change oriented.

The transformative mixed methods design followed a sequential order in which I collected and analyzed the quantitative portion of the study first. For the purposes of this article, I will report on only a small portion of the descriptive statistics from the Stewart (2013) study to establish how the qualitative methods then followed. Data was collected from a total of 1,654 grade 11 students in 62 schools across 14 parishes. From the descriptive statistics, 90.3% ( $n=1494$ ) of the students reported taking extra lessons in high school. As a response to the format of delivery (in which a total of 1498 students answered the item), 81.1% ( $n=1190$ ), reported taking extra lessons in an in-class group setting by a teacher or tutor, whether after school or before school. A small portion of students reported peer-to peer-small group tutoring, 11.9% ( $n=175$ ), one-on-one tutoring, 5.7% ( $n=84$ ), Internet tutoring, 0.6% ( $n = 9$ ), and lecture-style video format tutoring, 0.7% ( $n = 10$ ).

Guided by the principles of mixing methods, the level of interaction between the quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011) was determined by the number of students who reported taking extra lessons in the form of an in-class group setting by a teacher or tutor. I used a sampling strategy of confirming and disconfirming cases in which the purpose was to elaborate on initial analysis and seek exceptions that look for variations (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28). I purposefully selected three of the six education regions in Jamaica based on the students' responses to participation in extra lessons (see Appendix B for selected regions). I selected the first region and coded it as Region A as it represented students with the highest participation rate in extra lessons. Region A also represented (although not purposefully selected for this reason) the urban



capital hub of the country with the most schools in the country.

The highest resourced schools in the country are situated in this region. I selected the second region based on the second highest participation rate in extra lessons. Region B is also the second largest education region in Jamaica according to population of residents and number of secondary high schools. However, unlike Region A, Region B is more rural and, with a lower socioeconomic income rate than Region A (Stewart, 2013), and has fewer well-resourced schools. The third region, Region C was selected as having the lowest number of students participating in extra lessons. This region is predominantly rural with low socioeconomic income rates, high unemployment rates and the fewest well-resourced schools in the sample. With a resulting sample of 62 participants from all three of these regions, including, parents, teachers, students and government officials, I conducted both focus groups and one-on-one interviews.

In addition to the interviews, I conducted observations of classes held during the official or regular school day (henceforth referred to as regular-school classes) and extra lessons classes. I also completed document analysis of teachers' assessments of student work, and of the curriculum used in extra lessons. The focus group and one-on-one interviews were digitally/audio-recorded as well as documented through note taking. After transcribing the recording, I cleaned and edited the data.

Thereafter, I used a series of coding techniques namely, descriptive, in vivo, pattern and theoretical (Saldana, 2013) to derive several thematic constructs, themes and representative codes of the participants' stories. It should be noted that participants selected pseudonyms in their interviews, and as such, only pseudonyms of participants are utilized in this article.

## **Findings**

The findings from the larger study (Stewart, 2013) illustrated in a holistic way an adapted version of Cremin's (1976) *Ecologies of Education*, which I have termed *Ecologies of Extra Lessons*. This theoretical construct is comparable to Cremin's conceptualization in which he argued that education requires

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an understanding of the interrelationships of educational institutions with each other and their surrounding environment. Expanding on this concept, my construct of *Ecologies of Extra Lessons* emerged through the process of data analysis, mainly based on the participants' description of their views that extra lessons represented a constant interrelationship between education institutions and the larger society. Furthermore, participants described a complex interrelationship between external drivers and internal constructs of extra lessons. The external drivers focused on the larger societal and colonial legacy factors as well as the business of extra lessons, whereas the internal constructs focused on the within-school influences and conditions of learning.

The findings set out below describe the larger societal and colonial legacy factors underlying the current occurrence of extra lessons. Specifically, the thematic construct *Colonial Drivers of Education* is explained followed by related themes such as *Role of education*, *Examination-driven society*, *Conditions of schools*, and sub themes, *underperforming and uninterested teachers* and *barriers to learning*.

### **Colonial Drivers of Education**

Essentially, the external constructs of extra lessons represent the core drivers and resulting need for extra lessons to exist. As a participant in the study, the Chief Education Officer (CEO) at the Ministry of Education commented, "Because there are deficiencies within the system, then it [extra lessons] appears to be necessary." She ended by stating the irony of the situation: "Now, it was never intended as a country in providing free education that all people should find it necessary to have to pay for additional support for them to be able to do well in their exams" (Interview with MOE, CEO, 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2013).

What is not explicitly stated is that these drivers replicate some of the patterns of colonial schooling. For example, there is an overwhelming inherited exam-driven motive in the society due to the important role of education and the competition arising from the desire for social upward mobility. Additionally, the skewed and stratified nature of educational resources in schools in the postcolonial period

and the psychosocial conditions in this school system replicate the conditions of the school system established in the colonial era. These conditions highlight an undergirding social division between the traditional elite schools and the newly upgraded high schools. Traditional high schools in Jamaica were established as secondary schools and mostly built prior to the country's independence in 1962.

Newly upgraded high schools were former junior high schools that were upgraded to secondary high schools. There has been a resulting stigma surrounding the upgraded high schools as they tend to be less-resourced and considered academically inferior to traditional elite high schools, most of which were built during the colonial era. This stigma is deepened by government reports labeling some schools as failing, which has been done with respect to selected lower-status schools by the National Education Inspectorate Reports (NEI, 2013). In this respect, "Inspectors make judgments according to a five-point scale" (p. 2) and schools receiving a "level 1" are considered failing.

### **Role of education**

Patterns in the data suggested that education plays an important role in providing or limiting access to social upward mobility. Parents often used this concept as a driver and justification to explain their support of extra lessons. In the words of one parent:

Both my parents, now deceased, were teachers. And for us growing up, the only way to upward social mobility was education. There were no other means to reach the stars that you wanted to achieve, other than education. And that has been inculcated by me into my children. (Focus Group with Paul, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2013, Region A)

Similarly a single mother in Region A stated,

My parents were not educated, but they said that education was the only way out, right? and they wanted (for) all their children at least a university education. (Focus Group with Angie, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2013, Region A)

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This strong desire for what parents saw as upward mobility arguably results in the parents' sacrifices to work additional jobs and pay fees for extra lessons for their children (which is described later). A single father in Region B spoke about the opportunity cost to ensure his child's education:

To me the opportunity cost is not a real *quote/unquote* [gestures quotation marks in the air] 'putting a dollar' towards the education. Education is the key to success, so therefore from a tender age, no matter what the cost, we're going to get education. It's not the foundation for...what they can buy with it, but looking at tomorrow what they can gain. (Focus Group with Sam, 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2013, Region B)

Parents' strongly expressed view of education represented an undergirding mantra that "education is a must," using phrases, such as "by all means," "whatever the cost," and "the only way to success." Students and teachers alike shared in this mantra as they described varying levels of sacrifice and commitment to education. These views are subsequently linked to criticism from parents of what they perceived as the inadequacy or poor quality of schooling experienced by their children in regular school classes. Such views increased the desire for extra lessons and willingness of parents to pay for lessons, as schools fail to provide the quality of education parents desire for their children.

### **Examination-driven society**

The views of my participants, demonstrating their strong desire for a high-quality education, suggests that society as a whole has bought into the belief that increased education leads to upward social mobility. Although the study focused on secondary school students preparing for the CSEC exams, some participants traced the pressure to the highly structured exam curriculum starting at the primary level. For example, the CEO at the Ministry of Education stated that,

Our system is very exam driven, so we have a national assessment programme that starts from grade one right through to end of grade six. The curriculum is largely dictated by the exam requirements. (Interview with CEO, 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2013)

This programme of examinations, working up to the high-stakes examinations at Grade 6 (entrance to high school) and Grade 11 (school-leaving), was inherited from the British. When the British left, curriculum content was somewhat adapted to Jamaican culture, but the exam system remained. This inherited system was never designed to provide equitable education to all, but rather continued to be a stratification tool with which to differentiate social classes. With increasing numbers taking the exams leading to an increased examinations push, issues of curriculum alignment, remediation, and need for subject reinforcement became evident.

From all participants, patterns in the data suggested there was a need for enhanced reinforcement of subject matter, and consequently, students and parents turned to extra lessons for such reinforcement. As mathematics and English language are compulsory subjects in schools, the majority of students referenced these subject matters in addition to the sciences, business subjects, history and geography. For example, an extra lessons teacher stated, “If they [students] don’t understand [in the regular math school class], they get a better understanding in the evening” (Focus group with Patience, 31st January, 2013, Region B).

A parent in Region A said, “I think extra lessons, especially outside of school, gives you a better reinforcement of the subject” (Focus group with Tina, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2013, Region A). Another parent in Region B described reinforcement as resembling a rehearsal, stating, “In [extra] class, it’s like a rehearsal, rehearsing the thing you learnt in school, and you pick up on new ways of doing the same thing” (Focus group with Sam, 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2013, Region B). Similar to the parents and teachers in Regions A and B, students in Region C explained that extra lessons used repetitive practice. For example, one student in Region C stated, “And like if I’m doing a certain thing, and then we’re probably doing something more than one time, you can learn a different way” (Focus group with Nikki, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2013, Region C). Another student in the same region also stated, “You nah go get it in regular class, and you get to learn it again in extra class” (Focus group with James, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2013, Region C).

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The theme of remediation emerged from the data as being similar but slightly different from that of reinforcement. In fact, extra lessons were viewed as a remediation facility in which students who did not understand a subject or never learned the topic, can learn it in extra lessons. I was fortunate to receive an interview from the Minister of Education, who stated that although remedial extra lessons were supported by the government, this was in his view, wasteful:

The government heavily supports remedial education, extra lessons. The government partners, for example, with USAID, with Camp Summer Plus, which is a very useful remediation for deficiencies in grade school. The government spends in excess of a billion dollars, well in excess, on what is called the ASTEP programme [Alternative Secondary Transition Education Programme -- a remedial education programme introduced under the previous government] which is effectively a remedial programme. Can you imagine, the announcement in the press this week, which you must have seen, that the University has to be setting up what are effectively remedial courses in language for people who have reached the tertiary level. The government is hugely and, in my view, wastefully invested in remediation. (Interview with Minister, 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2013)

Extra lessons, in this view, are seen as a direct form of remediation. I found this quote to complement other sections of the data as later described in the section below on *Conditions of Schools*. Teachers explained that they did not always complete the syllabus in the regular school day and as a result students attended extra lessons to make sure they were taught all the topics of the syllabus. In some cases, this notion is supported by some students, parents, and teachers who explained extra lessons as a result of doing poorly in a subject, getting failing or low grades, or never seeing the topic introduced in class. A student in Region B explained,

For me in Grade 9, I didn't grab so much on chemistry. But since I started the chemistry class, the extra class, I've grasped more. And what I didn't get from Grade 9, I'm getting to understand more now. (Focus group with Nancy, 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2013, Region B).

Students often described levels of remediation and reinforcement needed, especially in Grade 11 as they prepared

to take the CSEC (Caribbean Secondary Education Certification) exams. Interestingly, the participants used the terms remediation and reinforcement to describe the role of extra lessons within the society, further supporting the concept of the examination-driven motive in the society.

### **Conditions of schools**

Based on the above findings, the question emerges as to why schools are generally not producing an acceptable level of academic achievement or embodying the best aims of education. From the garrisons of Trench Town to the uptown alcoves of Hope Road, the conditions of schools varied greatly. The conditions of schools were repeatedly referred to by every participant interviewed, as they described the need and reasons for extra lessons. From the data, the theme, *Conditions of Schools* was sub-divided into two supporting themes: *under-performing and uninterested teachers* and *barriers to learning*.

Patterns in the data suggest that due to the poor conditions of low-resourced schools, ranging from lack of resources to the poor performance of teachers, extra lessons are the primary alternative for pursuing effective learning. However, students in high-resourced schools in which there are repeated successful CSEC outcomes, also reported attending extra lessons. The reasons ranged from not being challenged enough in school to the distraction experienced by the behaviour of peers in regular school classes.

In addition to the voices of my participants, I constructed my theme *Conditions of Schools* using data from the observations and journal notes taken while conducting surveys across the 62 high schools in my study. My journal entries noted the prevalent social and physical borders between uptown and downtown schools, and the urban and rural schools. Most if not all schools had a designated area for a computer lab; however, depending on the school, there were either no computers, no Internet, and/or in some cases, no phone services. It can be argued that technology is a luxury in some developing countries, but in Jamaica, technology is prevalent in the more affluent schools. Teachers in the poorer schools constantly complained about the lack not only of

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technological resources available, but even of basic resources such as textbooks, writing materials, and the like.

In classrooms where there were upwards of 35 or more students, metal chairs were often welded together in columns of six chairs. When I asked teachers why the need for welded chairs, their response was, to prevent students from stealing them. It should be noted that schools in the uptown areas I visited did not have welded chairs, but schools in the garrison communities did. The psychosocial implication is the belief that students or even citizens from poor communities would be likely to steal from the schools. Furthermore, the impression of holding down students in the poorer communities was evident, with jail-like cell gates used to close in students in a classroom or library. In these cases, classrooms were locked with a padlock for which the teacher had the keys, and students remained in the classrooms behind the grills until teachers chose to open them.

My participants criticised not only the physical space of the school, but also questioned the teachers' lack of interest, care, training, and qualifications. Students, parents, and representatives from the Ministry of Education explained the need and importance of extra lessons as being due to the lack of qualified teachers in the system.

### **Underperforming and uninterested teachers**

I asked each of the groups why they believed extra lessons were important. All participants, including those in the Ministry of Education, described some aspect of poor-performing teachers. The Minister provided this explanation:

We are not cultured to provide targeted attention and support for our students. And how we, let's say for example how we compensate our teachers and how we support them, it doesn't allow for them to ... give 100 percent because of all the other social challenges and concerns that they have as individuals. So when you compare the kind of emphasis that is placed on making teachers competent in some other countries, it's very different in Jamaica. (Interview with Minister of Education, 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2013)

The Minister went on to explain how students get left behind on a constant basis in the Jamaican education system:



And so, if you have a class of 40 and they're doing mathematics and their learning styles are different, then it becomes very difficult for the teacher to handle. And because the teacher has a curriculum that is followed, the teacher has a tendency to move on even if it is just one or two students who are following. (Interview with the Minister, 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2013)

I also asked each participant to share his or her idea of a teaching philosophy. The Minister expressed this view:

The general teaching philosophy? I presume [this entails] a high measure of goodwill towards the kind of hope that is meant to fulfill and improve the cognitive and social skills of the students, but for many it is a job of frustration and for—through no fault of their own. There's a fair portion of them seeking what they can best get out of it [teaching]. And this is where the difficulties arise.... [some] teachers are the proponents of organizing promotion [seeking additional means of pay such as extra lessons] and to me that is a recipe for destruction. (Interview with the Minister, 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2013)

Several parents said that teachers often lacked the training and qualifications necessary to identify both students who need special education and those who need gifted education. One parent in Region A stated, “they [teachers] are not able many times to identify children who have capacities beyond the regular school, and to motivate them and stimulate them into, my expression, going to higher heights” (Focus Group with Paul, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2013, Region A). He went on to decry the lack of resources that teachers have to cope with on a daily basis, that are coupled with large class sizes and limited time. He stated,

I have a realization that the constraints that exist at school in the regular school day are such that teachers are not able, do not have the equipment, do not have the class size, the limit of class size to be able to cover the material that is perhaps required for them to cover at school. And in the absence of the teacher being able to do that at school, it becomes incumbent on me as a parent to seek to have that covered other than at school. (Focus Group with Paul, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2013, Region A)

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Such views cited by parents are examples of how most of them saw themselves as being responsible for guaranteeing optimal education for their children by paying for extra lessons. This seemed to be a direct response to the conditions of poorly resourced schools that result in barriers to learning.

### **Barriers to learning**

This theme, which emerged strongly from the data, represents some of the physical and spatial barriers as well as some of the social barriers to learning. The *physical barriers* refer mainly to the large class size as well as the lack of resources. The *social barriers* refer to the consequences of large class size, such as indiscipline among students and the constant reference to not enough time to teach. The supporting themes explained below may overlap, because most are interrelated.

*Large class-size.* Schools visited for this study had upwards of 50 students in a classroom. A student in Region C explained the implications regarding time when there are so many students in the classroom:

In my history class it's big and for extra lessons its just 7 of us doing history for CXC, and the general class there was 50 students there. So the teacher wouldn't have the adequate amount of time to get to everybody– I mean they don't have time. (Focus Group with Nikki, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2013, Region C)

Parents and teachers complained in the focus group that the class size was too big, and as a result, “there’s absolutely no way you can prepare for the students” (Focus Group with Mr. B, 15<sup>th</sup> February, Region A). The larger class size was also shown to be interrelated with increased *indiscipline*, not enough resources to share with every student, and not enough time to complete the topic or syllabus.

*Indiscipline.* In the student focus groups, I asked them to each describe a typical class at school in the day and compare it to an extra lessons class. The quote below is powerful in describing the scene of a typical mathematics class from the perspective of this student in Region A:

Class is noisy; everybody has their own mini group. The persons at the front of the class are the only ones in the discussion with the teacher, the teacher is not paying

anybody else any mind, you know at the front, so... he's not saying to the others they should be quiet. And if you're not at the front you're being distracted by everyone else talking around you. And then when you come here [extra lessons], if you're late the class is silent, and when you're early the class is silent, you are settled as soon as class should start and everybody is listening, and sir is up there talking, and you can say it's about, it depend on how many of us come late, 17, probably smaller sometimes. And at school, it took all like one session to settle down the class. If I had a two-session class, you waste one session, and we getting less work; and at [extra lessons] class, you getting a lot more in the 2 hours than at school. (Focus Group with Pebbles, 20<sup>th</sup> January, Region A).

Her description provides a rich context in which to understand the interrelationship between the barriers to learning at school, and the societal drivers for the alternative solution of extra lessons.

*Lack of resources.* Extra lessons teachers who also taught in schools recognized the limited resources due to large class sizes and the feeling of frustration to still perform under those conditions. One teacher stated, "I think at times we don't have enough resources to share among students in regular classes, but the extra classes are much smaller, so they can share." She went on to describe her frustration in the classroom setup as limiting: "The classroom setup limits me because there are not enough plugs, or you have to be transferring equipment that can be damaged back and forth for different classes, so it can be frustrating" (Focus group with Dora, 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2013, Region B).

Parents, especially in Region B, compared the level of resources between schools in Region A and Region B. One parent explained,

We have too few resources, and the school doesn't have the resources. If you go like to Excellence Academics, they have all the resources. If you go [to] Trident High, they have all the resources. And if a computer breakdown today, come tomorrow it is back up. (Focus Group with Sam, 1<sup>st</sup> February, Region B).

The discussion quickly turned from lack of resources to lack of time. In this instance, parents reinforced an emergent

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equation that the larger the classes, the less discipline and time used to produce success.

*Not enough time.* Time, and more so, the *lack of time*, was an unexpected theme that emerged from the data. I asked students to describe for me a picture of class time and extra lessons time. The contrasts were most striking in their descriptions of time needed to settle a class. As was mentioned in Pebbles' description above, it sometimes takes up to one session (or 45 minutes) to settle a class. Some parents, although they were not asked for this same description, also provided examples of wasted time due to inadequate or poor classroom management. A father in Region A stated,

One other problem is that in the regular school, the teacher is spending more time trying to get the class under control. So by the time the class is now quiet and the teacher is able to teach, they are given so many minutes so they don't have the time to go over the topic as they would like to. (Focus Group with Paul, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2013, Region A)

Teachers also acknowledged the lack of time to complete the given curriculum. One teacher simply stated, "The time that is spent (during the school day) is just not sufficient; they [students] are doing too many subjects" (Focus group with Simba, 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2013, Region B). Students reported studying upwards of 11 subjects in one year. The average across all the regions ranged between 5 and 8 subjects but in Region A, some students reported higher numbers. In Region C, a student explained that "sometimes you don't get the time to learn bout certain things, and you get to learn bout it in evening class" (Focus Group with Pablo, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2013, Region C).

These impediments to teaching and learning that exist within the schools drive alternative forms of schooling. To sum up, the interrelationship between the roles of education, the examinations driven society and the conditions of schools is marked by colonial legacies and drivers. My argument is that this constitutes 'coloniality' with respect to education in Jamaica.

## **Discussion**

The continuing historical pattern of stratification found in the data represented much of the challenges mentioned a decade ago in 2004 by the Ministry of Education: (a) access to full secondary education, (b) equity and quality of schools, (c) poor performance rates, and (d) increasing gender disparities in which girls are outperforming boys in schools (MoE, 2004). Arguably, this pattern can be attributed to what Hickling-Hudson (2011) termed “the hegemony of a social class-divided and unequally gendered model of education” (p. 459). This hegemony has been in existence since colonial times and continues to stratify the society and the education system. Hickling-Hudson (2011) described three interacting factors that maintain the hegemony:

The refusal of local elites to yield their domination of socio-educational advantage, the governmental and international support that they marshal and manipulate to maintain this privilege, and the fact that majorities challenge this pattern in limited ways, often having little access to the information and ‘clout’ needed to do so effectively. (p. 459)

In agreeing with this statement, I suggest that my data on extra lessons point to an important aspect of the hegemony of this model of education. Extra lessons in this school system arguably perpetuates the division of Jamaicans by social class. Reliance on extra lessons can represent a false hope among poorer students for high quality education, as wealthier students can afford better quality extra lessons. This is likely to deepen the stratification of the social classes. My study found that students in Region A received a distinctly better quality of extra lessons than those in the other two regions studied.

As seen in the qualitative data, I make the case that the widespread occurrence of extra lessons in Jamaica can be explained by the colonial drivers of education. Examining the situation which I refer to as ‘coloniality’, I looked specifically at the inherited examination-driven society, the role of stratified education in determining upward social mobility, and the poor conditions of schooling in the less well-resourced schools. As mentioned by some parents in the quoted excerpts above, extra lessons provide a space not only for remedial education

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but also for differentiated instruction in which gifted students can be challenged more than they would normally be during the regular school day. As a result, I observed students from affluent backgrounds who attend high performing schools also attending extra lessons as they reported being bored in class and not being challenged to learn more.

I argue that extra lessons exist to provide remedial and/or gifted education, and that this is due to a lack of educational capacity and inadequacy of factors that would drive educational decolonization. From an anti-colonial discursive perspective, the prevalence of rote and lecture-style learning in many schools increases issues of inequity in teaching and learning practices. For those who can afford high-quality extra lessons, it is possible to purchase more critical and radical approaches to pedagogy that are inclusive and engaging, and more likely to help students achieve excellence in competitive examinations.

The issues of equity and quality of schools, as referred to by officials from the Ministry of Education as well as by some parents, are a continuing challenge in the education system. I have argued in this study that they contribute to the prevalence of extra lessons. A member of the Ministry of Education in his interview with me said it well: “It is not the intention of the government to provide free tuition for parents to pay for private lessons so their children can pass the exams” (6<sup>th</sup> February, 2013). The relationship between socio-economic class and cost of extra lessons is dynamic in that, in each of the regions studied, some extra lessons were paid for at cost or provided at subsidized rates by teachers. However, there is a distinct difference in quality for extra lessons in which higher fees were charged.

In those cases, parents reported paying more for extra lessons in one term than they paid for school fees for the entire year. These costs were defended by parents who wanted value for their money and control of the quality of lessons. This in turn exacerbates a stratified capitalist micro-economy within the education system. However, when it is acknowledged that “we ‘graduate’ close to 25,000 of our students each year unprepared to even enter the workforce” (CEO Interview, Ministry of Education, 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2013), one can understand a parent’s rationale to pay for quality education in the form of extra lessons.

The reported access problems today for students are directly inherited from the colonial era in which not enough schools were built to educate secondary students. When British colonialism ended in Jamaica in 1962, there were a reported 723 primary-level grammar schools and 60 secondary schools established throughout the country (MoE, 2010-2011b). In 2012, there were a total of 923 primary-level schools and 148 secondary high schools; the latter were inadequate for offering education to all primary school leavers. The secondary school sector was expanded, but close to 70% of the secondary-level students who took the mathematics CSEC exams performed poorly (MoE, 2010-2011a), and results were also poor in other subjects. Although Jamaica has made significant strides in increasing the capacity of existing schools and access to secondary schools, students are competing not only for quality of education but also for access to education. There are simply not enough spaces in secondary schools to accommodate all graduating primary-level students. External agencies such as the World Bank and the United Nations with the Millennium Development Goals (UN Millennium Project 2005) may have contributed to this situation by putting precedence on the enrollment of children in primary education. The inherited examination-driven ethos of the society deepened the stratified hierarchical education system in which students from the upper social class continued to have disproportionate access to the better schools.

From a postcolonial perspective, the spatial and metacognitive barriers to learning within schools inhibit conditions for learning. As mentioned previously, the psychosocial representation of welded chairs, fastened to each other, as well as grilled, locked gates to prevent unwanted students and persons from entering the room and school, reflects spaces of confinement similar to prisons. The physical grounding of chairs to each other in poorly resourced garrison, inner-city schools inculcate a message of subservience and belittlement.

The argument posited by Dei's (2000) framework draws attention to the effects of a neoliberal and capitalist understanding of the current system of education. Toward this, Hill (2009) explained,

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In schools, intensive testing of pre-designed curricula (high-stakes testing) and accountability schemes (such as the “failing schools” and regular inspection regime that somehow only penalizes working class schools) are aimed at restoring schools (and further education and universities) to what dominant elites—the capitalist class—perceive to be the schools’ “traditional role” of producing passive worker/citizens with just enough skills to render themselves useful to the demands of capital. (p. 119)

This divisive effect is clear in systems which continue to educate students based on their social class. The prevalence of extra lessons has potential to counteract this pattern if equity and quality of lessons were accessible to all students, however that is not the case. For classrooms to become spaces for learning and education to be seen as the ‘practice of freedom’ (hooks, 2004), then the effects of colonial legacies and drivers of education must come to an end. Otherwise, we as educators continue to perpetuate unsupportable dichotomies of what is meant to be postcolonial education.

### **Conclusion**

Essentially, extra lessons in Jamaica thrive because of two factors: a) unsatisfactory conditions of learning, especially in less-resourced schools; and b) the drive leading parents to provide an advantage for their children even in traditionally elite schools. Whereas this paper discussed the conditions that gave rise to extra lessons such as the poor conditions of learning and the drive for increased upward social mobility, the data does not focus on the scope and prevalence of extra lessons. Although such material was collected in the larger study (Stewart, 2013), this article focuses on the conditions that explain and increase the demand and supply of extra lessons.

Dei’s (2000) anti-colonial discursive approach framed my way of analysing the data and understanding the themes. From a postcolonial stance of considering implications for the future, I would go further, arguing that extra lessons are likely to deepen the problem of the stratification of access and equity issues already faced in the education system. Whereas students can benefit from additional learning through extra lessons, some may not be able to afford quality extra lessons.



My data illustrated the continuing impact of a colonial heritage through an inherited examination-driven society with severe limitations in schooling. It seems to be the case that this pattern is being repeated by current government policy carried out by today's education officials and accepted by the consumers of education.

The question remains, why does the current system continue to replicate colonial issues of inequality? The question arguably calls for an examination, utilising postcolonial theory, of the country's education policies in a socio-historical context, which may throw some light on the current problematic state of the education system.

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### Appendix A

Table 1 *Jamaica Education Regions and Parishes*

Regions	Parish
Kingston*	Kingston St. Andrew
Port Antonio*	St. Thomas Portland St. Mary
Brown's Town	St. Ann Trelawny
Montego Bay	St. James Hanover Westmoreland
Mandeville	St. Elizabeth Manchester
Old Harbour*	Clarendon St. Catherine

Note. Adapted from *2010-2011 Jamaican Education Statistics*. Ministry of Education 2010-2011. Kingston, Jamaica.

\* Study's selected regions.

### Appendix B

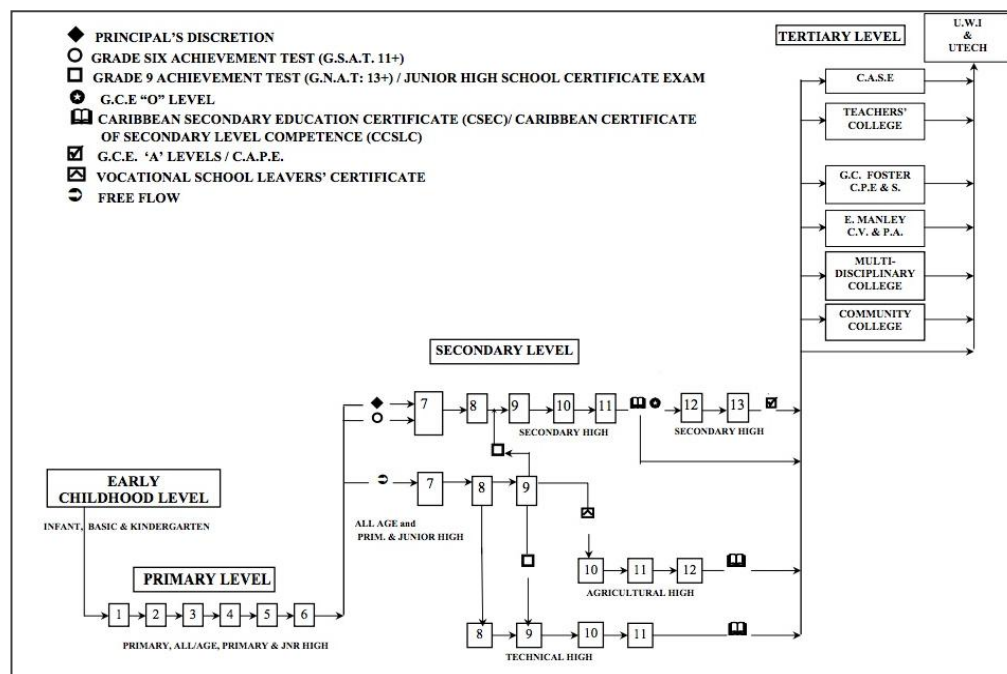


Figure 1: Flow chart of Jamaica's formal public education system. Adapted from *Jamaica Education Statistics 2012-2013*. Ministry of Education, 2012-2013